BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS

Service BC
Ministry of Labour & Citizens' Services

Infoline

Contact: bcstats.infoline@gov.bc.ca Issue: 05-49 December 9, 2005

- **BC housing starts down 12.2% in November**
- **Building permits in the province increase 2.9% in October**
- **New housing costs continue to rise in BC metropolitan areas**

Aboriginal Labour Force

- **BC's working-age, off-reserve Aboriginal population continues to face high unemployment, according to the third quarter postings of the Aboriginal Peoples Labour Force Survey.** The survey shows that, on average, from July to September of 2005, the unemployment rate for the province's Aboriginal population (12.1%) was notably higher than that of non-Aboriginals (5.7%). Both the Métis population (8.2%) and North American Indians (15.0%) experienced high unemployment rates. The data indicate that Aboriginal women (14.0%) in the province had a harder time finding work than men (10.4%). Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Region reported a particularly high unemployment rate (12.7%) compared to the non-Aboriginal population (4.6%) in that same region

Data Source: BC Stats, BC Aboriginal Labour Force Survey

Christmas Shopping

- **With average per capita spending of $846, consumers in BC were the fourth-biggest spenders in the country in December of 2004.** On average, Canadians spent $804 each in retail stores last December, well above the monthly average of $555 over the rest of the year. Albertans outshopped the rest of the country, spending an average of $967, while shoppers in Saskatchewan spent the least ($699).

Data Source: SC, Catalogue 11-621-MIE – No. 034

Political Activity & Young Adults

- **Young adults aged 22 to 29 in Canada are less likely to vote than adults over the age of 30.** According to a new study of young adults interviewed in a 2003 survey, only 59% had voted in at least one election immediately prior to the survey. In contrast, of those interviewed, 77% of the country's overall voting-age population reported voting, with 71% of individuals aged 30–44 and 85% of those aged 45 and over casting ballots. The proportion of young people who turned out to vote was highest in Quebec (74%), followed by the Atlantic provinces (64%), and the Prairies (53%). In BC, only 49% of young adults aged 22 to 29 reported casting ballots. However, young adults across the country were just as likely as older citizens to engage in alternative, non-voting activities such as signing a petition, boycotting or choosing a product for ethical reasons, or attending public meetings

Data Source: SC, Catalogue 11-003-XIE

The Economy

- **Housing starts in the province continued a downward slide in November, posting a significant 12.2% drop (*seasonally adjusted*) following a 0.3% decrease in October.** Nationally, starts were up 7.4% from October, on the strength of new building activity in six provinces with increases ranging from 1.5% in Quebec to 33.3% in Ontario. New Brunswick (-38.9%) and Newfoundland (-14.8%) posted the biggest declines

Data Source: CMHC

- **Some urban areas of BC showed prominent increases in housing starts (*unadjusted*) in November.** Starts in urban BC were down 9.6% over November 2004, due mostly to Vancouver's 21.3% decrease over the same month last year. A decline in multiple starts (-30.0%) in Vancouver offset the gain (+7.5%) in single starts. Victoria experienced a dip in both multiple (-79.8%) and single (-19.2%) starts, bringing its overall total down 68.0% from November of last year. All other urban areas of the province recorded growth in the number of new housing projects in November. Prince George (+158.3%) more than doubled last year's total, while Abbotsford (+100.0%) and Kelowna (+49.7%) also reported notable increases. *Data Source: CMHC*

Report Oceania a small but growing market for BC

Did you know...

Almost half (46%) of Canadians wait until December to start shopping for the holidays and 5% wait until Christmas Eve —*Source: Ipsos-Reid Survey November, 2004*

- **The value of building permits issued by the province's municipalities in October climbed 2.9% (*seasonally adjusted*) over September, as residential permits increased (+7.0%) and non-residential building projects slipped downwards (-7.8%).**

  In Vancouver, permits dropped 8.9% from September to October. Abbotsford (+64.9%) posted the most prominent growth of BC's census metropolitan areas; however, permits in Victoria (+33.9%) were also significantly higher than in September.

  Canadian permits edged up 1.2%, as increases in Alberta (+21.1%), BC (+2.9%) and Nova Scotia (+1.4%) managed to offset declines in all other provinces. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Over the first ten months of 2005, building intentions in the province were robust, increasing by 30.2% (*seasonally adjusted*) over the same period last year.** Intentions for non-residential building projects (+71.8%) accounted for much of the growth, but planned residential projects (+16.7%) were also notably higher.
  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Unadjusted data indicate that planned spending on new building projects in the first ten months of the year jumped sharply in most areas of the province.** Total planned investment was strong in all regions with the Mainland/Southwest area recording the lowest rise in value of permits (+20.0%) and the Cariboo (+87.4%) and North Coast (+93.5%) regions being the most prominent in terms of growth. Increases in other areas ranged from 33.5% in Vancouver Island/Coast, to 56.6% in Nechako. Residential building permits were up in every region with Kootenay (+75.1%) seeing the most significant jump. Mainland/Southwest (+6.2%), where the majority of BC's permits are issued, recorded a more modest increase in residential permits issued. Kootenay (-31.1%) was the only region where the value of industrial permits was lower than in the first ten months of 2004, while Nechako recorded a whopping 1,003.9% upsurge over the same period last year. Kootenay (-40.6%), Nechako (-12.2%) and Cariboo (-6.3%) were the only regions in the province where the value of commercial building permits was down.
  Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **The cost of new housing in BC's two biggest metropolitan areas continued to climb in October.** New house prices in Victoria were 10.0% higher than in October 2004, reflecting rising land values (+16.0%), as well as more expensive housing (+7.2%). Vancouver's New Housing Price Index was up 4.7% in October, with inflationary pressure also coming from both housing (+2.9%) and land (+6.3%) prices.

  At almost double the national average (+5.4%), Victoria posted the biggest increase in the country, followed closely by Calgary (+9.6%).
  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **There were 162,603 businesses with employees in BC during the third quarter of 2005, a 4.4% jump over the same quarter last year.** Nationwide, there were 1,050,500 employer businesses, up 2.6% from the same period last year. Alberta (+4.5%) and Ontario (+2.8%) were the only other provinces where employer businesses have grown faster than the national average. Although many other provinces recorded increases in businesses with employees—ranging from a 0.5% rise in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland to 1.6% in Manitoba—BC, Alberta and Ontario accounted for the bulk of the overall national expansion. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

Canadian & US Manufacturing

- **There was a 5.2 percentage point gap between the growth of Canadian and US shipments recorded over the 12-month period between September 2004 to August 2005.** Current dollar shipments were up 5.5% in the US and just 0.3% in Canada. Much of the disparity over the past year is attributable to price differences of manufactured goods as they leave factory gates. The recent appreciation of the Canadian dollar has resulted in lower Canadian producer prices.
  Data Source: Statistics Canada

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For data originating from Statistics Canada, data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the catalogue number.

Infoline Report

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Originally published in *Tourism Sector Monitor* Issue 05-10. Annual Subscription $60 +GST

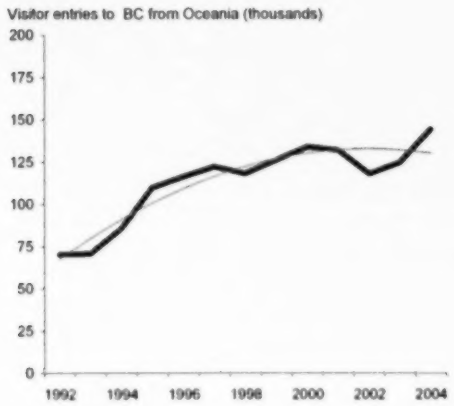
Oceania a small but growing market for BC

Entries from Oceania have more than doubled since 1992

BC welcomed 144,300 visitors from Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the South Pacific) in 2004. This was 15.6% more than in 2003, and represented the second year of solid gains in entries from this region.

Oceania is not a major tourism market for BC—only 10% of entries from overseas are from countries in this region, but it is becoming more important. Between 1992 and 2004, the number of visitors entering BC from Oceania has more than doubled, and the region's share of overseas entries has risen from about nine percent in the early 1990s to more than ten percent in the last two years.

Entries from Oceania have doubled since 1992

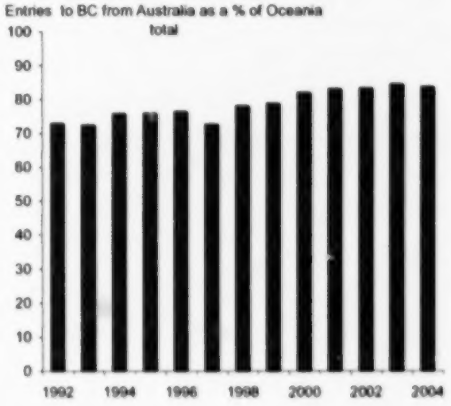


Data Source: Statistics Canada

The growth in visitor entries from Oceania (+105% since 1992) is quite phenomenal, outpacing even the rapid increase in entries from Asia (+91%) that has occurred since the early 1990s. Total overseas entries expanded 81% during this period, and entries to BC from Europe were up 53%. Last year, entries from the US, the biggest source of visitors to BC, were only 33% higher than in 1992. This suggests that a growing number of visitors from the South Pacific view Canada, including the western regions of the country, as a desirable tourist destination. There is some evidence to support the view that interest in travel to Canada is growing—in 2004, residents of New Zealand identified Canada as the 13th most popular travel destination, ahead of other favoured nations such as France, Italy and Germany.

One factor contributing to the solid growth in entries from the South Pacific may be that Vancouver is Canada's west coast point of entry, and many travellers from Oceania enter the country through the Port of Vancouver. The Vancouver airport is a hub for travel from the far east, and this may explain some of the growth since a large share Canadian entries from Oceania (60%) are recorded in BC. The province's share of total entries from Oceania has been climbing—the percentage grew from 48% in 1992 to 64% in 2004.

More Oceania travellers enter Canada via BC



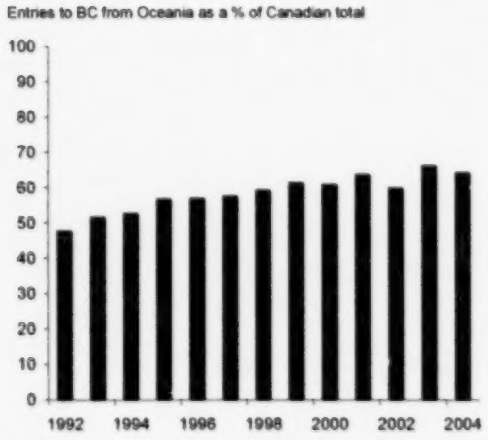
Data Source: Statistics Canada

Six in ten visitors from Oceania used BC as their point of entry to Canada in 2004. There were 144,300 entries from Oceania in 2004, which was up 15.6% compared to 2003. People from Oceania continued to show their interest in BC in 2005, a total of 112,500 people took trips to Canada via BC in the first eight months of 2005, up 11.3% compared to the same period of 2004.

In 2004, Canada welcomed 225,200 people from Oceania, up 19.2% from the previous year. This showed a strong recovery from a downward trend experienced since 2001. The downturn was exacerbated by the events of 9/11 and the subsequent safety, security and health concerns. A recent economic recovery has improved consumer confidence in Oceania markets, resulting in increased demand for travel and tourism to Canada. Visits to Canada from Oceania reached a historic high of 33,984 in June 2005.

More Australians came to BC in 2004

Australia is the biggest source of visitor entries from Oceania



Data Source: Statistics Canada

Entries to BC from Australia more than doubled since 1992

Data Source: Statistics Canada

Australians are the biggest source of visitors—more than 80% of entries from Oceania to BC are from Australia. More than 120,600 Australian visitors entered directly via BC, 14.6% more than in the previous year. In May 2005, BC welcomed 19,600 (seasonally adjusted) travellers from Australia, the highest monthly total on record. The province's share of total entries from Australia has been climbing— the percentage grew from 74% in 1992 to 82% in 2004.

Despite many economic stumbling blocks around the world in the last decade, Australia has maintained fairly steady economic growth. This economic stability has been beneficial to Canada, as overnight trips from Australia have increased on average by 5.5% in the last ten years (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004).

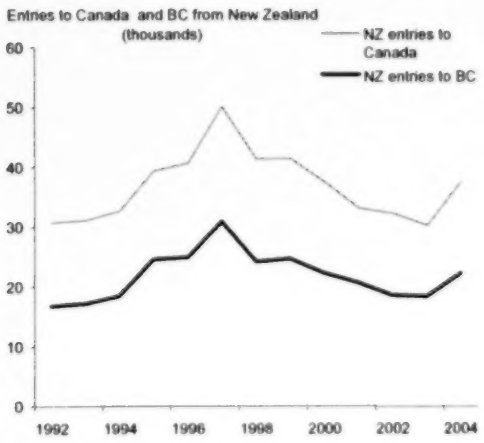
On the heels of an economic rebound accompanied by a favourable exchange rate, Australian travel to Canada grew to 185,100 in 2004.

Significant growth in the number of visitors from New Zealand to BC in 2004

Among all of the provinces, BC is the most attractive region for people from New Zealand – approximately six in ten visitors from New Zealand entered Canada via BC. There were 22,200 entries in 2004, up 21.1% compared to the previous year. In addition, visits from New Zealand were up 14.5% during the first eight months of 2005, relative to the same period of 2004. However, New Zealand represents a smaller share of total Oceania entries to BC, which went down from 24% in 1992 to 15% in 2004.

New Zealand, as the second most important Oceania market for Canada, experienced double-digit growth (23.9%) in 2004 – more than 37,500 New Zealand travellers visited Canada.

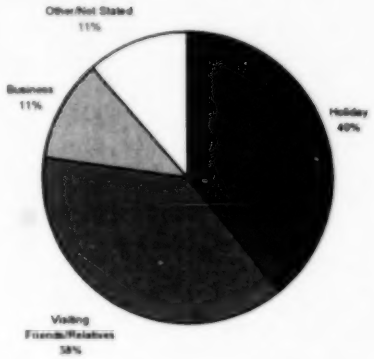
Travel from New Zealand to BC picked up in 2004



Data Source: Statistics Canada

According to Statistics New Zealand, in 2004, pleasure trips to Canada rose about 10%, of which 39% of visits to Canada were for vacation and holiday purposes, while 38% of New Zealand travellers came to Canada to visit relatives or friends.

Characteristics of New Zealand Resident Travellers to Canada



Data Source: Statistics New Zealand

Infoline

December 9, 2005

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also on the Internet at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jul 1/05	% change on one year ago
BC	4,254.5	1.3
Canada	32,270.5	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	2004	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	157,241	7.7
GDP *($ 1997 millions)*	139,205	4.0
GDP *($ 1997 per Capita)*	33,129	2.8
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1997 per Capita)*	20,182	1.4
TRADE ($ millions, seasonally adjusted)		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Sep	3,535	-0.5
Merchandise Exports - Sep	3,075	1.6
Retail Sales - Sep	4,281	-0.3
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		12-month avg
(all items - 1992=100)	Oct '05	% change
BC	126.3	2.0
Canada	128.5	2.3
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
(seasonally adjusted)	Nov '05	% change on prev. month
Labour Force - BC	2,279	0.6
Employed - BC	2,167	0.8
Unemployed - BC	112	-2.9
		Oct '05
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	4.9	5.1
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	6.4	6.6
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Dec 7/05	Dec 8/04
Prime Business Rate	5.00	4.25
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	5.60	4.90
- 5 year	6.15	6.15
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Dec 7/05	Dec 8/04
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.1582	1.2251
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.8628	0.8224
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Nov '05	one year ago
BC	717.66	2.4
Canada	712.77	3.9

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

Data update

Population estimates 2005

Municipal and regional district population estimates are a basic measure that feeds into decisions around funding, services, and much more. This release contains revisions for the period back to 2002.

Municipal and regional district population 2005

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/estspop.asp [*continued*]

Updated results

Electoral District Profiles

Our 18-page profile of each electoral district contains a brief listing of election results in the riding. This section is now based on the official results of the May 17, 2005 provincial election as published by Elections BC.

Provincial Electoral District Profiles, 2001

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/profiles/csd_txt.asp#PED_mark [*continued*]

Released this week by BC STATS

- Tourism Sector Monitor, November 2005

Next week

- Exports, October 2005

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